United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form





Type all entries	-complete appli	cable sec	tions		·				·
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historic Wash	nington County	Courth	ouse		-				
and/or common									
2. Loca	ation					•			
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3. Clas	sificatio	n				- - N. J.			
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4. Own	er of Pro	pert	У				:		
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street & number	Washington Co	ounty Co	ourthouse		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·				
city, town	Salem		vicir	nity of		state	India	na	
5. Loca	ition of L	.ega	Desc	riptio	on				
courthouse, regis	stry of deeds, etc.	Washir	ngton Coun	ty Court	house	-			
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7. Description Condition — excellent — unaltered — ruins Check one — unaltered — unaltered — moved date — moved date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

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Situated in the center of the Salem Public Square, the Washington County Courthouse is an expression of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. The limestone for the building was quarried one mile southwest of Salem, cut on the site, and laid in a coursed ashlar facing over brick bearing walls. The building stands two stories above a raised basement level, with wall dormers lighting the third floor attic area below the decked, hipped roof.

All four sides of the rectangular building are essentially the same, with three main sections: a slightly projecting central pavilion with a gabled wall dormer, flanked by squarish corner sections with crenelated parapets.

The surface of the building is rock-faced from the ground level to the top. This is interrupted between the basement and first floor by a dressed stone water table. Above the first floor windows are shallow dentils below a dressed stone band course. The dentil motif is seen again above the second story windows at the cornice level, this time sandwiched between two narrower band courses. Above the cornice level, a crenelated parapet finishes the corner sections, whereas the central pavilions feature parapeted, gable wall dormers, flanked by paired piers with spherical finials.

All windows in the building are round-arched, with movable doublehung sash, with the exception of three round, fixed windows that appear above the second story windows in the corner sections.

The main entrance on the south elevation is expressed by a projecting arcaded porch, five bays wide. The round arches rest on short columns, with massive Corinthian capitals. The onestory porch terminates in a balustrade with spherical finials topping the piers. A smaller, three-bay version of this porch appears on the north elevation. There are no entrances on the east and west elevations.

The symmetry of the main (south) facade is broken by a five-story clock tower which stands just left of the main entrance. The elements of the tower conform to those of the rest of the building, from the ground up to the cornice line. Here, the dentil trim and dressed stone band courses of the cornice are surmounted by a square third story, which features a band of five narrow round-arched windows. A string course forms the archivolt, and continues around the tower. This first level of the tower culminates in a crenelated parapet, with corner piers topped by spherical finials.

The next level of the tower is octagonal, and features clock faces on four of its sides. Alternating sides feature oval windows. This level terminates in an engaged balustrade with short, round piers that have conical caps. The uppermost level of the clock tower is round, with an open arcade. Inside is the bell, which was recast after it was damaged by lightening in 1934. The entire clock tower ensemble is crowned by a steep conical roof.

The interior features broad corridors and high ceilings. Floors in the basement corridor and first floor lobby are of stone, and iron balusters grace the stairs. Each room contains a fire-place and many of the original furnishings are still in use.

Clock faces are six feet in diameter. The clock mechanism, which survived the lightening damage in 1934, was built by E. Howard and Company, of Boston, and uses 350 pounds of crushed stone for its weights.

8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799X 1800–1899 1900–	Areas of Significance—C — archeology-prehistoric — archeology-historic — agriculture _X architecture — art — commerce — communications	community planning conservation economics education engineering exploration/settlement	landscape architectur law literature military music philosophy X politics/government	re religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	1886-88	Builder/ArchitectMcDona	ald Bros., Louisvill	e, Kentucky

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Washington County Courthouse is architecturally significant as a well-preserved, fine example of the Richardsonian Romanesque style.

This style was used in several of the Indiana courthouses constructed about this time, among them the Blackford, Hancock, Starke, and Fulton County Courthouses. But the Washington County Courthouse appears to be the earliest among these, having been started during the lifetime of Richardson. The present courthouse was the third to be constructed on this site in the Public Square.

Since its construction nearly one hundred years ago, the Washington County Courthouse has served, continuously, as the center of political and governmental activity for Washington County.

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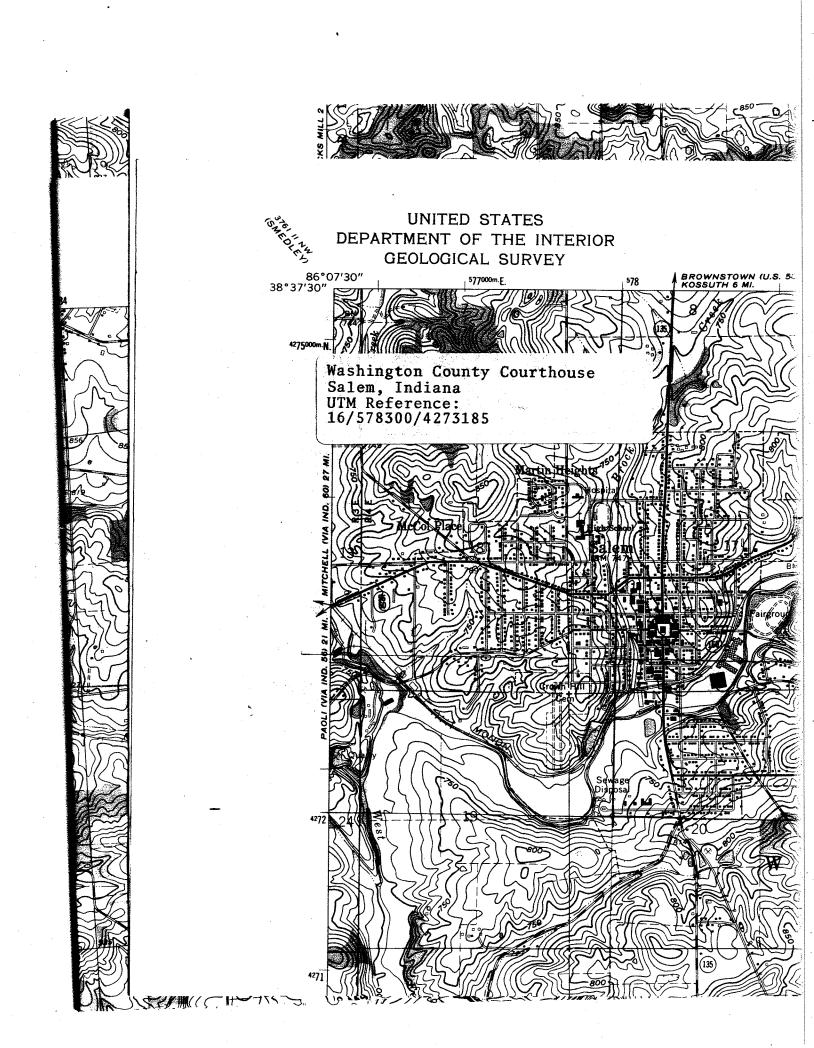
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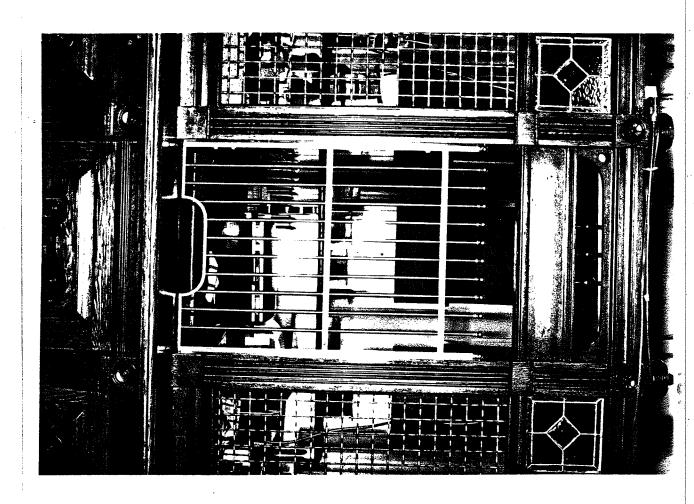
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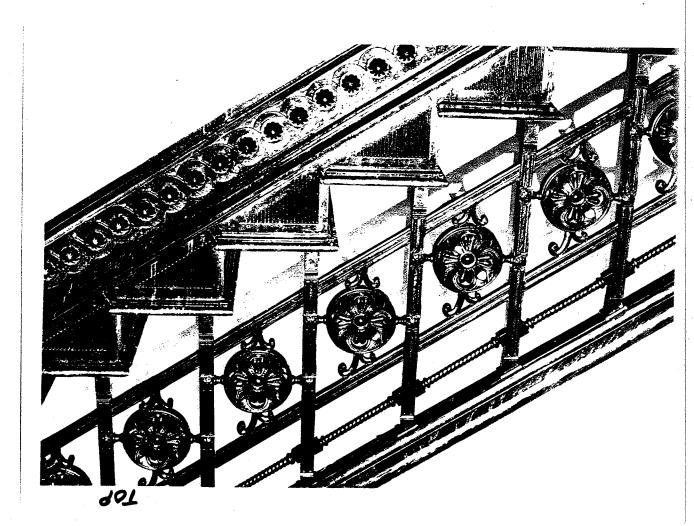
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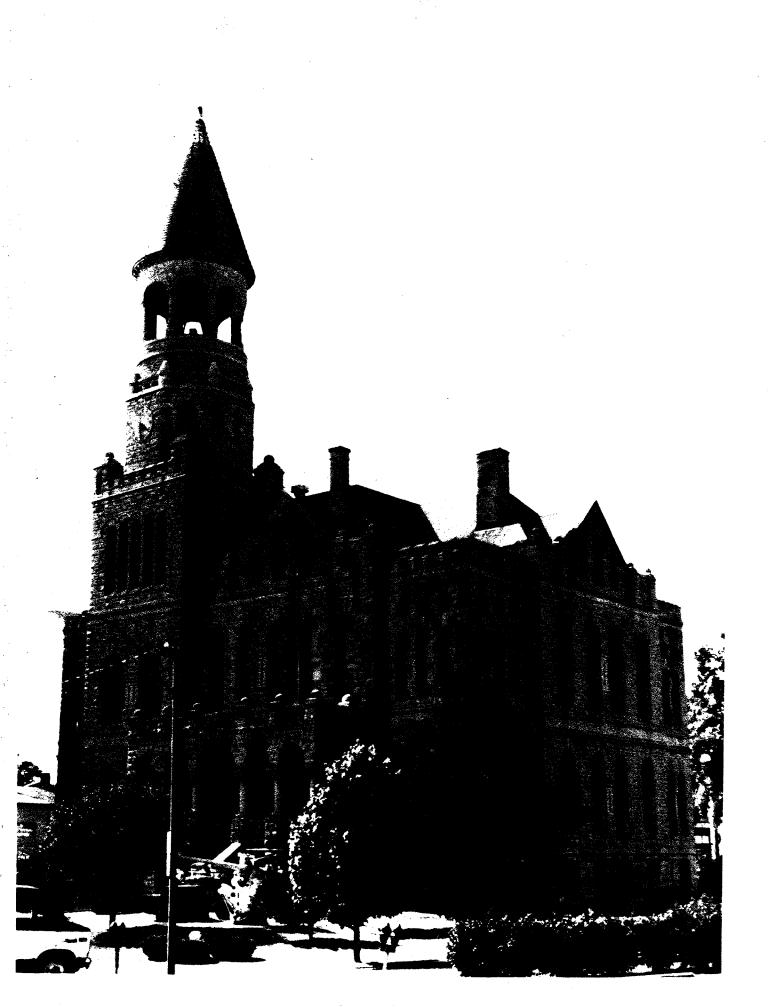




Washington County Courthouse Salem, Indiana Wm. V. Petrere 6-15-79 Interior, Treasurer's Office Photo # 3 of 4

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Washington County Courthouse Salem, Indiana Wm. V. Petrere 6-15-79 Interior, iron stairway near lobby Photo # 4 of 4

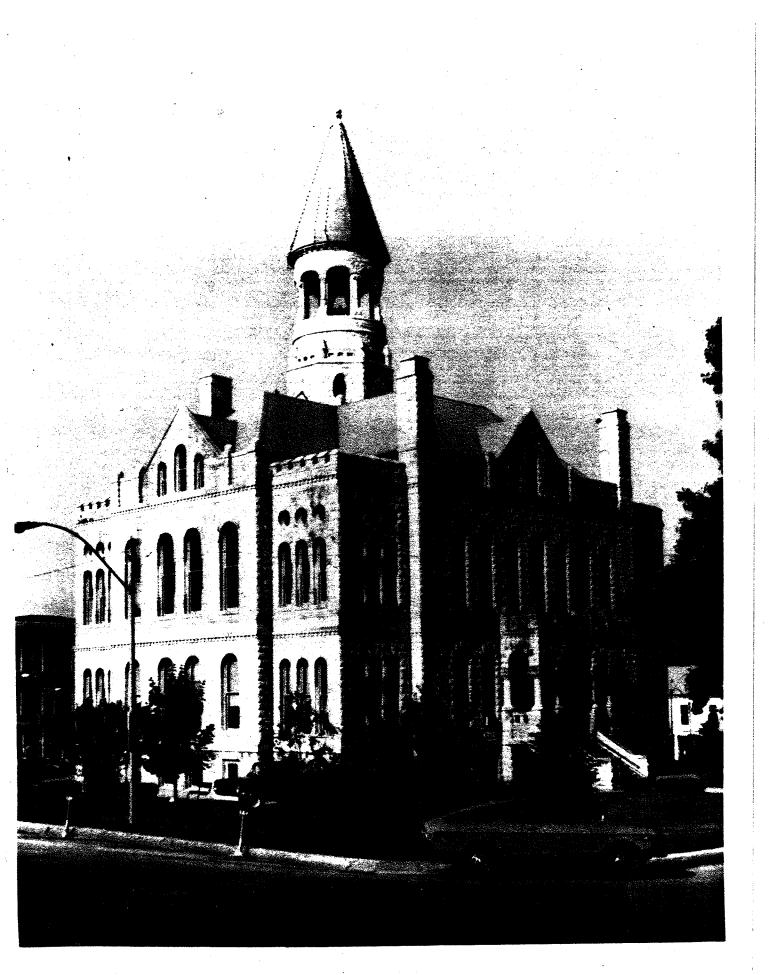


Washington County Courthouse Salem, Indiana Wm. V. Petrere 6-15-79 View from southeast corner Photo # 2 of 4

Wiew from Southeast corner -6-15-79

Taken by William V. Petrere 104 J. Main St. Salem, Ind. 47167





Washington County Courthouse Salem, Indiana Wm. V. Petrere 6-15-79 View from northeast corner Photo # 1 of 4



WASHINGTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE View from Northeast Corner June 15, 1979

Taken by William V. Petrere 104 S. Main St. Salem, Ind. 47167

